

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-02 NEA-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
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C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 4778

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, PN
SUBJECT: THE "JEWISH QUESTION": C'EST FINI?

REF: A. PANAMA 4421; B. PANAMA 4471

SUMMARY: CONTROVERSY OVER ANTI-SEMITISM IN PANAMA HAS DIED
DOWN AFTER A POSTMORTEM IN THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PRESS.
JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADERS HAVE MET WITH GOP REPRESENTATIVES,
BUT NOT WITH TORRIJOS TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION. WHILE PUBLIC
CONTROVERSY HAS WANED, DELETERIOUS EFFECT ON GOP-JEWISH
COMMUNITY RELATIONS LIKELY TO PERSIST. END SUMMARY.

1. THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE EXISTENCE OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN
PANAMA APPEARS TO HAVE SUBSIDED FOR THE MOMENT. MEDIA
REACTION TO THE CUADRA KRESH ARTICLE AND LETTER FROM
RICARDO HOLZER REFUTING JACK ANDERSON'S CHARGES CONTINUED
WEEK OF JUNE 30, (REF B). "CRITICA" EDITORIAL ON JUNE 21
HAILED HOLZER'S LETTER AS THE CAPSTONE TO ITS EFFORTS TO
"EXPOSE A STUPID AND ABSURD PLOT HATCHED IN THE CANAL ZONE
AND PICKED UP BY JACK ANDERSON'S GROSS MENDACITY."
"JUZGUE EL PUEBLO" COLUMN BY RICARDO LINCE IN JUNE 22
"MATUTINO" PRAISES THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE FOR AVOIDING
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THE TRAP SET BY "THOSE WHO WISH TO DIVIDE US THROUGH
RACIAL ISSUES", NOTING THAT PANAMANIAN ARE A "COSMO-
POLITAN PEOPLE FREE OF THE PRIMITIVE RASCIST HATRED THAT
CHARACTERIZES ANTI-SEMITISM".

2. "LA REPUBLICA'S" ENGLISH EDITION ON JUNE 22 CARRIED
THE TEXT OF A LETTER WRITTEN TO THE EDITOR OF THE

"MIAMI HERALD" BY PANAMANIAN BUSINESSMAN, EUGENE MCGRATH, BROTHER OF ARCHBISHOP MARCOS GREGORIO MCGRATH. MCGRATH REPUDIATES JACK ANDERSON'S STORY ON ANTI-SEMITISM IN PANAMA, CHARACTERIZING ANDERSON'S UNDOCUMENTED CHARGES AS "SLANDEROUS AND RIDICULOUS". MCGRATH DENYS THE EXISTENCE OF ANY DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE JEWISH COMMUNITY HERE, AND EXPRESSES THE CONCERN THAT ANDERSON'S ARTICLE "CREATES DOUBTS IN THE MINDS OF THE U.S. READERS ABOUT PANAMA." MCGRATH'S LETTER WAS PUBLISHED IN THE "MIAMI HERALD'S" INTERNATIONAL EDITION ON SUNDAY, JUNE 26. (THE INTERNATIONAL EDITION IS WIDELY DISTRIBUTED IN PANAMA AND THE CANAL ZONE.)

3. LEADERS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO MEET WITH TORRIJOS. THEY DID MEET WITH NATIONAL GUARD G-2 LT. COL. NORIEGA AND TORRIJOS' FISCAL ADVISOR ERNESTO PEREZ BALLADARES TO DISCUSS THE "JEWISH PROBLEM". NORIEGA RESPONDED TO THE JEWISH LEADERS' QUERY AS TO THE MOTIVATIONS BEHIND THE LIBYA TRIP BY NOTING THAT QUADHAFI WAS AN UNPREDICTABLE ACTOR WHO SUPPORTED "BAD ACTIONS" IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD. ESTABLISHING CLOSER RELATIONS WITH LIBYA NEGATED THE POSSIBILITY THAT SUCH ACTS MIGHT OCCUR IN PANAMA. THE GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES ADMITTED THAT PERMITTING PUBLICATION OF THE CUADRA KRESH ARTICLE HAD BEEN A MISTAKE, AND SAID THAT "TORRIJOS FINALLY UNDERSTANDS THE STRENGTH OF THE ISRAEL LOBBY"

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IN THE U.S." JEWISH LEADERS ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE GOP ISSUE A STATEMENT REPUDIATING THE PEREZ-HERRERA MEMO (REF A) IN ORDER TO ERASE THE PERSISTENT IMPRESSION THAT IT REPRESENTS OFFICIAL POLICY. NORIEGA AND BALLADARES PROMISED TO CONVEY THE JEWISH COMMUNITY'S CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO TORRIJOS. BALLADARES WILL REPORTEDLY MEET AGAIN WITH THE LEADERS TO PRESENT OMAR'S REPLY.

4. COMMENT: JEWISH LEADERS WERE UNDERSTANDABLY MIFFED AT TORRIJOS' UNWILLINGNESS TO MEET WITH THEM. THEY ALSO RESENT THINLY-VEILED SUGGESTIONS THAT JACK ANDERSON OBTAINED THE MATERIAL FOR HIS STORY FROM THEM. AS A RESULT, THE JEWISH COMMUNITY MAY EXERCISE MORE RESTRAINT IN SUPPORTING THIS GOVERNMENT. ALTHOUGH THE CONTROVERSY HAS FADED FROM PUBLIC VIEW, ITS DELETERIOUS EFFECT ON THE GOP'S RELATIONS WITH THE JEWISH COMMUNITY WILL LIKELY PERSIST.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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